



## CHRONOLOGY

### California Dependency Courts

California has a rich history of judicial support for children and families dating back to 1903 when the state's juvenile court was first established. This reverse chronology highlights key court events, laws, and activities around issues of child welfare. It also relates California milestones to laws and funding from the U.S. Congress.

- 2008 California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care submits recommendations to the Judicial Council on August 15. The commission, appointed by Chief Justice Ronald M. George in 2006, is a 42-member, multidisciplinary commission that focused its recommendations on improved court performance and accountability, increased court collaboration with other agencies that serve foster children, and funding and resource options for child welfare services and the courts.
- 2007 Child Welfare Council holds first meeting. The Council is a high-level advisory body of leaders from all branches of government and other stakeholders who will focus on coordination across agencies and government systems.
- 2006 Assembly Bill 2480 requires the Judicial Council to specify when attorneys should be appointed for children on appeal. Assembly Bill 2216 requires the Judicial Council to establish performance measures for juvenile courts. The Judicial Council is the policy-making body of California's court system.
- 2006 Congress establishes two new grants available for each state's Court Improvement Project. The first grant must be used to enhance data collection and analysis. The second grant must provide multidisciplinary training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare staff. These grants are given to the states for projects that improve juvenile courts.
- 2005 The Judicial Council's Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) Court Improvement Project releases its Reassessment Report, which provides a comprehensive review of California's dependency courts and makes recommendations for further improvements. The Reassessment Report is a follow-up report to the first Court Improvement Project report that was issued in 1997.
- 2005 In collaboration with the California Department of Social Services, CFCC initiates the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Project and its Permanency Project to provide education and technical assistance to local courts, child welfare agencies, attorneys and others on ICWA compliance and expanding approaches to permanency for dependent children.
- 2004 The Judicial Council creates the Dependency Representation, Administration, Funding, and Training (DRAFT) pilot program, which focuses on improving the quality of attorney representation for parents and children in dependency cases by testing caseload standards, providing attorney training, adopting attorney performance standards, and improving attorney compensation.

- 2004 The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, a national, bipartisan panel of experts, issues a report with recommendations for improving the nation's foster care system, including expanding federal court improvement grants and strengthening court oversight of juvenile cases.
- 2001 Assembly Bill 636 requires the California Department of Social Services and the counties to measure and improve outcomes for children in California's child welfare system.
- 2001 The Judicial Council adopts a rule of court that specifies that an attorney should be appointed for a child in dependency court unless the court finds that a child would not benefit. In those few cases in which an attorney is not appointed a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) must be appointed as the child's *Guardian Ad Litem*.
- 2000 Senate Bill 2160 directs the Judicial Council to adopt a rule of court that specifies when an attorney should be appointed to be a child's *Guardian Ad Litem* in juvenile dependency cases.
- 2000 The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) creates the Center for Families Children & the Courts (CFCC) through a merger of the AOC's Statewide Office of Family Court Services and its Center for Children and the Courts.
- 1998 Assembly Bill 2773 directs California to implement the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act and shortens timeframes for reunification.
- 1997 The Administrative Office of the Courts creates the Center for Children and the Courts. Juvenile court projects, including the Court Improvement Project and the Juvenile Review and Technical Assistance (JRTA) project, are part of the center.
- 1997 U.S. Congress adopts the Adoption and Safe Families Act which emphasizes child safety and provides financial incentives to states to promote permanency planning and adoption.
- 1997 The Administrative Office of the Courts releases the Court Improvement Project Report based on California's initial court improvement assessment that took place in 1995-1996. The report includes recommendations to improve California's juvenile court system. An improvement plan is created to implement the recommendations.
- 1995 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) establishes the Court Improvement Project. Congress created a grant program in 1994 in recognition of the expanded role of courts in achieving stable, permanent homes for children in foster care. Grants are made available directly to courts for court improvement programs.
- 1995 In collaboration with the California Department of Social Services, the Administrative Office of the Courts creates the Judicial Review and Technical Assistance (JRTA) project in response to California's failure of the 1992 Title IV-E audit. The JRTA team provides training and technical assistance to judicial officers, court staff, attorneys, and child welfare department staff to improve compliance with Title IV-E requirements. California passes the subsequent Title IV E federal audit and the report cites the work of the JRTA project as a strength that contributed to the state's compliance.

- 1994      The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act authorizes HHS to establish Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs).
  
- 1992      California does not pass the Title IV-E federal audit of foster care cases. Federal auditors determine that 39 percent of the cases reviewed were not eligible for Title IV-E funding, and California faces a potential sanction of \$51.7 million.
  
- 1988      Legislation is enacted encouraging the development of Court Appointed Special Advocate programs (CASA) in all counties. The Judicial Council is directed to provide grant funds to these programs.
  
- 1987      Senate Bill 243 implements recommendations from the Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth including providing for termination of parental rights in juvenile dependency proceedings. The legislation also establishes specific jurisdictional definition for court intervention. SB 243 was double-joined to a trial court funding bill, which made court appointed counsel for parents and children a court cost rather than a county cost.
  
- 1982      Senate Bill 14 requires the state, through the California Department of Social Services and county welfare departments, to establish a statewide system of child welfare services.
  
- 1980      Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act provides funding stream for out-of-home care and establishes a preference to maintain and reunify families.
  
- 1978      The Los Angeles Superior Court establishes the first Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program in California. CASA provides volunteers to work with children in the dependency system and provide reports back to the court.
  
- 1974      Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) mandates states to establish child abuse reporting laws, defines child abuse and neglect, and defines when juvenile courts can take custody of a child.
  
- 1961      Congress establishes foster care payment under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC) to help states pay for children who live in foster care.
  
- 1937      Prior California juvenile court law is rolled into the newly created Welfare and Institutions Code, creating a more fully developed mechanism for declaring a child free from the custody and control of his or her parents.
  
- 1930      California Supreme Court holds that the juvenile court cannot withhold the custody of a child from the parents without a specific finding of abuse or neglect as required by the relevant statutes.
  
- 1909      Laws establish that a child has a right to a private hearing in dependency and delinquency matters, and a child cannot be taken from a parent or guardian without consent, unless the court makes a finding that the custodian is incapable, or has failed or neglected to provide for the child properly.
  
- 1903      California establishes its juvenile court. The law applies to children under 16 and defines dependent and delinquent children.